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# THE SCHOOL REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

VOLUME XXX

SEPTEMBER, 1922

NUMBER 7

## **Educational News and Editorial Comment**

### THE POLICY OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The Boston meeting of the National Education Association performed an act of plain justice in elevating William B. Owen to the presidency. He is the author of the present plan of organization. It was his energy and parliamentary ability which put the plan into operation. He has been the chief force at the last two meetings in working out the plan so that it begins to promise better things.

He now enters upon a new and much more arduous task, that of making the Association an agency for the promotion of a truly national program of education. At Salt Lake City, two years ago, and for a long time before, the energy of the Association was absorbed in internal politics of a type unworthy of the profession. There has been no constructive policy guiding the activities of the constituent units of the Association. Centrifugal forces have appeared, separating from the main body those departments which have real problems and are anxious to work on them. First, the Department of Superintendence made it clear that it was not in sympathy with the petty rows of the Association. Following the example of the superintendents, the elementary-school principals are separating themselves from the Association and going about their business. The grade teachers seem to be less certain where they are going, but they are

trying to have a show of their own. To the observer who watches all of this from the point of view of a student of education it seems clear that the symptoms are those of a distracted mind. The Association ought to stop thinking about itself and ought to begin thinking about something really constructive.

Mr. Owen ought to feel that the great body of the Association will support him if he uses the full strength of his office to set the mind of the teaching profession at work on problems of American education. Let us have once more groups of workers who come together to counsel about grade and university organization and about materials of instruction. Let the higher institutions be invited to come back and take a place in the councils of the Association. Let teachers and superintendents learn through mutual help in solving school problems that democracy does not consist in a warfare between officers of school systems. Let the relations of the school to the public be treated by a body of professional thinkers who see clearly that school people can guide public policy only when they are able to formulate wise measures which in a broad-minded way comprehend public interests as well as the interests of the teachers.

In short, the hour has struck, and opportunity stands waiting. We are devoutly grateful in the confident hope that the man is here who is equal to this new and promising occasion.

#### VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND GENERAL EDUCATION

One of the most hopeful signs of development within the American school system is the new attitude that is developing with regard to the relation of vocational education to general education. At the time the Smith-Lever and the Smith-Hughes laws were enacted there were strong forces working for the separation of the two types of education. Experience has shown, since those early days, that separation is not in keeping with the spirit of American institutions and not expedient for either type of training.

At the last meeting of the National Society for Vocational Education, resolutions were passed indicating that the members of that society realize that a national system of education must be a unit. At the Boston meeting of the National Education Association the

way was opened for the National Society for Vocational Education to become a department of the more general organization. These significant moves ought to be commended as in the right direction, and every effort ought to be made to close up what once seemed to be a dangerous breach.

#### FALLACIOUS STATISTICS

One of the national weeklies recently published an editorial which illustrates the difficulty of getting accurate statistics about education before the American public. The editorial is an earnest plea for more education and proceeds as follows to demonstrate the deplorable state of the country.

We have 603 colleges, universities, and technical schools, the leading 122 of which are endowed for more than half a billion dollars, with another half billion invested in buildings and equipment. And yet, out of our potential college student body of 20,853,516, as represented by the number of children enrolled in our public schools in 1918, there were that year registered in our colleges, universities, and technical schools only 375,359 students.

This means that 98 out of every 100 of our grade-school children fail to go on to college. Is it because 98 out of 100 young Americans are not deserving of higher education? We deny it. You must look for the answer elsewhere. Either they fail to go on because they don't think it worth while, or because we are not giving them a fair chance to go on. In either case, Father and Mother, there is a problem and a job for you worth all the energy you have.

The editor who wrote these lines evidently performed a very simple calculation. He used the aggregate number of children who for twelve and more years are passing through the public schools as a base with which to compare the number of students attending college for only four years and came out with 2 per cent as the strictly arithmetical result of his thinking. This editor would hardly venture to make in his office a brief calculation on the retail cost of food supplies and announce a coefficient to the waiting world. He probably does not know that education has its science and its expert figures as well as does the retail market. Is it not time that the teaching profession of the country began to write for the public press the real facts about education?

The fact is that nowhere in the world is higher education so free and so eagerly pursued as in America. Nowhere is there as much

spent on higher education, either in public funds or in private time and energy, as in our country. Nowhere is there so bright an outlook for the increase of expenditures on schools or for the increase of attendance on higher institutions as in the United States.

We agree with our editor that there should be more education and better, but we believe that the way to bring about such highly-to-be-desired results is to get at the facts as they are.

#### A STUDY OF LARGE AND SMALL CLASSES

It is one of the commonly accepted beliefs of the teaching profession that economy in school expenditures effected through increase in the size of classes is disastrous and indefensible. To be sure, there has been no real evidence on this matter, and ordinary experience has demonstrated beyond any possibility of doubt that a great deal of very successful teaching is done by good teachers in charge of very large classes. We all know, also, that classes may be too small for the cultivation of that social enthusiasm which is essential to success in instruction.

With the economic stress that has of late begun to affect schools and with the realization that increase in the number of pupils in a class is the readiest means of reducing school costs, it is natural that school officers should ask for evidence with regard to the effects of increasing the size of classes. The Bureau of Educational Research of the University of Illinois has rendered a large service in carrying through a careful experimental study on this matter. Certain pairs of large and small high-school classes taught uniformly were measured as to their achievements in various subjects with the result described in the following paragraphs:

The tables of this chapter show that at the end of the experimental period the achievements of the students in the two types of classes were approximately equal, and there is a slight indication that those taught in small classes were superior. Since the educational investment can be materially decreased by increasing the size of class in the high school, one might infer that the efficiency of the school would be increased by organizing classes enrolling from 35 to 50 students instead of classes enrolling from 20 to 25. In addition to the fact that there are several uncontrolled factors whose influence is unknown, it is necessary to bear in mind the exact conditions of the experiment. Since the same teachers taught both a small class and a large class, there was no difference between the

total amount of work done by the teachers who handled the large classes and the teachers who handled the small classes. In fact, they were the same teachers. Thus, this experiment failed to set up the conditions of large classes as a general plan of organization of a high school. It did, however, realize the conditions which not infrequently exist in the smaller high schools where it is desirable to have a few large classes assigned to teachers who are given compensating small classes or who have the number of classes reduced accordingly. The results of the experiment, therefore, can be applied only to those situations in which the teaching load is kept constant. In such cases the evidence collected indicates that approximately the same average achievement can be expected from the pupils taught in large classes as from those taught in small classes. In other words, the results of this experiment indicate that there is no loss of efficiency caused by organizing a few large classes if the other work assigned to the teacher is such that the teaching load is not increased.

One should recognize that the results of this experiment should not be applied to the question of the size of class where increasing the size of class results in a distinct increase in the teaching load. The instruction which students receive is given partly in the classroom and partly through written work and individual conferences. In such subjects as English composition, algebra, and science requiring laboratory work, it is customary with most teachers to require a large amount of written work. A teacher who gives instruction to five classes of forty students each has a much heavier teaching load than the teacher who instructs five classes of twenty students each, unless he introduces compensating changes in the amount of written work, in the method of handling it, and in the number of individual conferences. In such cases the question of class size is so intimately connected with the method of instruction that we are not justified in drawing any inferences from an investigation in which the method of instruction was assumed to be the same for both types of classes.

#### INDEPENDENCE OF SCHOOL BOARDS

The ever-recurring problem of the relation of the school board to the other branches of city government came up in Springfield, Massachusetts, in the form of a controversy because the board of education revised the distribution of its funds after the city council had voted a specific budget.

The decision of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts contains a number of paragraphs which are of very general interest. The spirit of the decision is clearly indicated by the following quotation:

The general statutory provisions as to the powers of the school committee, to which reference has been made, have been in substance the same for many

years. They had been interpreted by numerous decisions and had acquired a well-settled meaning long before the enactment of the law providing for a budget. Without reviewing these decisions one by one, it is enough to state summarily their essential conclusions.

The school committee is an independent body, intrusted by law with broad powers, important duties, and large discretion. The obligation to select and contract with teachers implies examination as to their fitness and of necessity carries with it the authority to fix the compensation to be paid. It would be vain to impose upon the school committee responsibility for excellence of the instruction to be afforded to pupils and to deprive them of the power to determine the salaries of teachers. There is much of self-sacrifice and devotion to the common welfare among teachers in the public schools. But, nevertheless, the character of service to be obtained depends to a considerable degree upon the compensation offered. The full and appropriate discharge of their duties by school committees requires ample power to select competent teachers. The legislature, moved by obvious and strong reasons, has vested the school committee with the absolute and unconditional power to agree with teachers upon their salaries to the end that high standards may be secured and maintained in the education of the youth of the commonwealth. In the exercise of their honest judgment on the question of salaries for teachers, the school committee is not restricted to the amounts appropriated. For the time during which schools must be kept by law the municipalities must pay such salaries as may be fixed by the school committee. To take this power from the school committee would break up the long-established system of our law in regard to public schools. The only supervision which the city council or towns can exercise over the school committee is to vote to close the schools after they have been kept the length of time specified by the law. The school committee may make all reasonable rules and regulations for the government, discipline, and management of the schools under their charge. This includes a determination within the bounds set by the statutes of the subjects to be taught and the nature of the schools to be maintained, and the exercise of discrimination, insight, and wisdom in the election of teachers and in the general supervision of the school system, with all the incidental powers essential to the discharge of their main functions.

The statutory provisions under which these decisions were rendered have been substantially the same for a long time. They have been re-enacted without change in the successive revisions of the laws. The interpretation of their terms in the numerous decisions which have been cited may be presumed to have been adopted by the General Court.

This body of statutory and common law regarding the matters of universal interest and profound importance to the public weal was established and widely known before the budget law came into existence. The budget law must be constructed and applied in the light of this history and with reference to this background of school law.

## FAILURES IN HIGH SCHOOL

The following article from *School Topics*, of Cleveland, is interesting for the quotation which it contains and also for the facts which it contributes.

Normal percentage of failures in high school should fall between 5 and 12 per cent, it is asserted in a bulletin of the United States Bureau of Education in reporting a survey of the Wilmington, Delaware, schools. Study of failure statistics of various cities, however, would indicate that such percentages are "ideal" rather than "normal," and that Cleveland does not show to disadvantage when its high-school failures are compared with those of other communities.

Figures compiled by the division of reference and research, for the first semester of 1921-22, show that 18.1 per cent of the pupils enrolled in mathematics classes in the ten Cleveland senior high schools failed; and 16.7 per cent of those enrolled in Latin classes failed. In French, 13.9 per cent failed; in science, 12.9 per cent; in Spanish, 11.5 per cent; in English, 10.5 per cent; commercial activities, 8.9 per cent; history, 6.7 per cent; drawing and applied arts, 3.6 per cent; industrial activities, 6.9 per cent. In all cases there were more boys than girls who failed.

The Bulletin prints some figures obtained from other states:

"Of thirty Connecticut high schools studied, algebra failures amounted to 17 per cent of the class enrolment; geometry, 13.7 per cent.

"In New Jersey of fourteen high schools studied, mathematics caused the downfall of 20 per cent, Latin 18 per cent; English, history, and commercial subjects, 11 per cent each.

"Eight New York high schools were studied. In Latin 18 per cent of the class failed, in mathematics 16 per cent, German 13.5 per cent, French 11.6 per cent, history 10.4 per cent, science 9.8 per cent, English 8 per cent, business subjects 8 per cent, Spanish or Greek 41 per cent.

"In St. Paul the mathematics failures were 21.8 per cent of those studying the subject; the next highest was French with 17 per cent failures. Records for 4,120 pupils in Denver show 24 per cent in mathematics and 21 per cent in Latin. Averages for eight surveys, including some of the above, show mathematics, 20 per cent; Latin 19.6 per cent, German 17.2 per cent, English 11.6 per cent, history 10.1 per cent, science 14 per cent, business subjects 9.5 per cent."

It is apparent from the above showing that even the cities which have first call on teaching talent either are not getting good mathematics teachers, or that there are elements intrinsic in the subject itself which cannot be assimilated by some minds.

As a promotion basis the Wilmington surveyors offered the following suggestions:

"The term mark should be based on (a) daily recitations, (b) written tests, at least four a semester, (c) note books, library assignments, project reports.



The final semester mark should be one-third of the sum of the averages or estimates for the three types of work."

The following method of distribution of marks, which approximates the normal curve of distribution, was recommended. Suppose that 100 pupils receive school marks A, B, C, D, E, representing five approximately equal steps from the highest ability to complete failure. The marks should be assigned as follows: A and E each to from three to ten pupils; B and D each to from twenty to twenty-five pupils; C to from forty to fifty pupils.

Teachers should not be required to force this distribution against their judgment, but variations should be fittingly explained, it is recommended.

#### A HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' CLUB

The bulletin of the State Department of Education of Connecticut publishes a short article by C. W. Maddocks, one of the state supervising agents, in which an account is given of a club organized by a group of high-school principals who serve a number of the small cities in the southern part of the state. The account suggests a method of cultivating a professional attitude among such a group of school officers and outlines a program of discussion which may serve to stimulate others to form like groups.

The outlines of topics discussed are as follows:

1. How can we effect an increase in the usefulness of the small high school to the community?
  - a) Evening or Saturday courses
  - b) Courses in citizenship
  - c) Short winter courses
  - d) Lyceum courses
  - e) Public discussions of problems of current interest
2. How can we improve the pupil morale in the high school?
  - a) Athletics
  - b) Literary and subject clubs
  - c) Social activities
  - d) Importance of home influence in effecting improved scholarship, discipline, and effort
  - e) The school paper
  - f) Pupil co-operation and support in the principal's program for school betterment
1. What and when should a high-school principal study?
  - a) Benefits
    - (1) Study of books and periodicals
    - (2) Extension courses
    - (3) Summer courses

- b) Dangers
  - (1) Too much time given to professional study
  - (2) Too little time devoted to study and research
- c) What books should a high-school principal have in his library?
- 2. How can a high-school principal encourage teachers to improve professionally?
  - a) Worthy professional and reference library in school
  - b) Value of principal's guidance and leadership
  - c) What minimum, yearly, professional advancement can be expected of each teacher?
- 3. Report of committee on spring track meet.
- 4. Report of committee on baseball schedule and regulations.

#### ON ROMAN HISTORY

Now comes the test prepared by the Advisory Committee of the American Classical League. Its purpose and administration are described as follows:

The purpose of this test is to determine the extent to which the study of Caesar and Cicero increases the pupil's knowledge of the history of the last century of the Roman republic, and to obtain data upon which to base constructive recommendations for improving the teaching of Latin in this respect.

This test may be given any time during the months of May or June, 1922. It is intended to be given to all pupils finishing their third year in high school, whether they have taken Latin or not. It is recommended that the test be given in the third-year English classes or in the home-rooms of third-year pupils. Pupils taking the test will divide naturally into certain groups of which the following four will be most significant for the purposes of this study.

1. Pupils who have studied Latin for two years or three years but who have not studied Roman history.
2. Pupils who have studied Latin for two years or three years and who have also studied Roman history.
3. Pupils who have studied Roman history but who have not studied Latin.
4. Pupils who have studied neither Roman history nor Latin.

Pupils who have taken a course in ancient history in which the history of Rome is included may be regarded as having studied Roman history.

As a basis for estimating the difference in ability possessed by these various groups, teachers will be asked to furnish the final grades of all pupils in elementary algebra.

The test itself includes various statements which are either true or false, such as:

Caesar, on his return from his Gallic campaigns, confiscated the property of his political opponents.

Vercingetorix was the first leader of united Gaul.

Caesar's "Commentaries on the Gallic War" were written for political effect.

The effect of the Roman occupation of Britain was more lasting than it was in Gaul.

The governor of a Roman province served without salary.

The proportion of citizens who voted in Roman elections was about the same as in American elections today.

The total number of questions runs to fifty.

It is to be noted that these questions are framed with a view to "improving the teaching of Latin in this respect." In order to accomplish the end proposed, teachers are asked to put this list of questions, not only before pupils who might by some stretch of imagination be supposed to be informed, but also before those "who have studied neither Roman history nor Latin."

The whole performance in this particular case goes a little beyond the worst that this Latin inquiry has up to this time perpetrated. The external forms of scientific inquiry are being employed with a lack of discrimination which excites both pity and regret. If Latin has reached the stage where this kind of an inquiry will improve it, the proper procedure for the public seems to be clear.

#### A REPORT ON HISTORY TEXTBOOKS USED IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

In October, 1920, Superintendent Ettinger of the New York City schools addressed a letter to the chairman of the Committee on Studies and Textbooks requesting him to organize a representative committee of principals and teachers to make an investigation of the history textbooks then in use in the city schools. This communication was prompted by a number of complaints received by Superintendent Ettinger to the effect that some of the histories used in the schools contained matter disparaging to the accomplishments of certain noted characters in American history and that some books contained propaganda. Early in October, 1921, the committee was appointed. Its membership consisted of a district superintendent and twenty principals and teachers. Among the things the committee set out to do were: (1) to establish a set of fundamental principles and reasonable standards for the writing of textbooks on

history intended for use in the public schools; (2) to consider in detail the charges made against certain histories and the replies thereto; (2) to invite open public criticism so that the list of histories might be purged of even the slightest taint of impropriety, propaganda, or unpatriotic sentiments.

The report of this committee, a document of 171 pages, has recently appeared. A summary of the findings as amended by the Board of Superintendents is to be found on the last two pages. Chief among these are: (1) No evidence was found to support the charge that certain textbook writers were unpatriotic. (2) The charge that some history texts were written as a result of unwholesome propaganda was not sustained for lack of evidence. (3) Pupils in the public schools should not be taught the personal weaknesses of our national leaders. The findings also contained a statement of what the committee felt were the chief faults of history textbook writers. Some of these faults are the use of offensive illustrations and cartoons, failure to realize that the usefulness of a textbook is determined by the presentation of material that makes for good American citizenship, the discussion of controversial topics, failure to describe adequately and vividly many of the most inspiring events in our history, and the use of the textbook for the promulgation and exploitation of the writer's personal beliefs.

On the whole, the report is very discouraging to one who is not interested in the perpetuation of national myths. The Bancroft type of patriotism that the committee seems to want is, of course, old enough to be respectable, dating back to the days of Polybius. Age, however, is not a sufficient reason for perpetuating the sort of patriotism which permeates Bancroft's volumes. The modern historian does not feel that to be patriotic he must claim perfection for the founders of the government or rather for all of the people who were alive at its foundation. His object is achieved if he succeeds in making them human to the readers of his pages. He does not feel called upon to glorify and deify them as did the Bancroft school of historians.

Besides resenting the type of patriotism which the committee seems to desire, many readers of the report will rebel against the authorities cited to prove that the statements made by certain text-

book writers are either inaccurate, derogative, inadequate, misleading, incomplete, or partisan. When the committee again and again cites Bancroft, Hildreth, Fiske, Lossing, and Harper's *Encyclopedia of United States History* as evidence that McLaughlin and Van Tyne and other textbook writers were all incorrect in certain statements found in their books, there is tacit admission that the committee is not aware of the dawn of a new day in historical writing. An example of what is meant here is the committee's objection to McLaughlin and Van Tyne's statement in describing the Battle of Lexington that Hancock and Adams stole away across the fields. What the committee wants is what Harper's *Encyclopedia of United States History*, Lossing, Bancroft, and Fiske agree in saying, namely, that they were persuaded to retire to a more secure place. This is only one of many similar cases the reader meets in going through the report.

On the whole, the case made against most of the textbooks under fire is weak, because of the authorities cited. The committee seems unaware of the progress that has been made in historical writing during the past generation. We no longer go West in a Conestoga wagon; neither do we cite Bancroft, Lossing, and Fiske to prove that our present-day historians are wrong in their statements and interpretations of the chief facts of our history. While in the minds of the committee history may be a conspiracy against the truth, it is to be hoped that their opinion is the exception rather than the rule. Had the citations in the report been to such recent and noted works as *The American Nation* in 28 volumes, *The Chronicles of American History* in 50 volumes, and the volumes of Channing's *History of the United States* that have already appeared, the findings in many instances would have been different. On reading the report one feels that the committee had in mind a certain kind of history and was continually seeking and selecting authorities to justify its views. Such a procedure is certainly not the one followed by the modern historian.

R. M. T.